



Enhanced Walkabout Summary Report

Introduction

On September 19, 2013, seven participants met at Rocky Gap Elementary and High School in Rocky Gap, Virginia to examine the walking and bicycling network in the area and identify potential improvements that the school could address through a Transportation Alternative Program grant. Participants included representation from Bland County, the Rocky Gap Elementary School, the Bland School Division superintendent’s office, the Bland County Sherriff’s Department, and the Virginia Department of Transportation Bristol District.

The walkabout team met, observed the elementary school’s arrival procedure, walked around the school and the nearby streets to address safe routes to school issues, and discussed findings and potential recommendations. The team divided into two groups to observe the student arrival from separate locations: near the bus loading zone on Eagles St. between the elementary and high school, and near the parent loading and unloading zone at the elementary school front entrance. After arrival, each group walked separately along the same route around the area; along Eagles Road from the high school to the intersection with North Scenic Highway (State Route 52), and then along N. Scenic Highway from the former rail bridge near Wolf’s Creek Highway (State Route 61) to the entrance of the elementary school. The list below summarizes the walkabout findings and the attached maps highlight the potential project locations.

Walking Routes

Route (streets, intersections, etc., show on map)	Speed limit	Road Width	No lanes each direction	Sidewalk width and continuity, if present	Shoulder width, if present
Eagles Road – North Scenic Highway (VA 52)					
Eagles Road	25mph	15-18 ft.	1 each direction	No sidewalks	No shoulder
North Scenic Highway (VA 52)	35 mph (55 mph outside of area)	20-25 ft.	1 each direction	No sidewalks	3-6 ft.

Existing conditions

School location. Rocky Gap Elementary School is located on N. Scenic Highway at the eastern intersection of Eagles St. The elementary school has 247 students, with 100 students living within two miles, but only four students regularly walk to and from school. Although this walkabout focused primarily on the elementary school, its adjacency to the high school suggests that both schools would benefit from SRTS improvements.

Student travel to school mode and processes. The most recent survey of student travel shows that 99 percent of elementary school students either ride the bus to school or are dropped off and picked up by a family member. The remaining students carpool with other students. None of the students reported walking or biking to or from school in the travel survey.



Seven buses are used during arrival to drop students off on Eagles Road, between the elementary and high schools. The buses arrive between 8:04 and 8:10am. During arrival, the walkabout team noted that elementary students who receive breakfast at school must cross Eagles Road between the high school and the elementary school, because all food is served in the high school cafeteria. While buses are unloading students, the buses' lighted stop signs are displayed. Moreover, there is an informal process for parents, when dropping children off for school, to always enter the school at the driveway on the west end of campus from Eagles Road. In the afternoon, this process is reversed and all vehicles – parents and buses – arrive from the driveway on the east end of campus from Eagles Road.

Finally school staff, as well as high schools students who drive, use an unmarked gravel road to access a grass field from North Scenic Highway, to use as a parking lot. The field is to the west of the elementary school and north of the high school.

SRTS program support. Other than school staff support for students during arrival and dismissal, Rocky Gap Elementary and High School do not currently have an active Safe Routes to School program. The advent of a community-endorsed greenway plan has precipitated interest in identifying safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle routes for students.

Walkabout Summary

The walkabout team examined several locations that are part of the walking route to school identified in the table above.

North Scenic Highway between the elementary school and nearby bridge (to the east). The elementary school entrance is on N. Scenic Highway east of a blind curve. There is no sidewalk along either side of the road; only a narrow pathway on the south side (the school side), which is interrupted by driveways of the local businesses. There is a pedestrian sign to the east of the elementary school, and there is school zone pavement marking near the entrance of the school as well. East of the school campus, Wolf's Creek Highway T's into North Scenic Highway from the north, linking to a residential neighborhood. Additionally, part of the Frederico Morini Bicycle Trail System follows Wolf's Creek Highway and is marked with a high visibility sign.

Although North Scenic Highway does not have a high volume of traffic, it is a bypass road for Interstate 77, and becomes very busy when the interstate is congested. Walkabout participants noted that motorists who use North Scenic Highway as a bypass are often unaware of the reduced speed limit within Rocky Gap and maintain higher speeds while driving through. Within the limits of Rocky Gap, the speed limit of North Scenic Highway is 35 mph, however outside of Rocky Gap, the speed limit is 55 mph. To the west of the elementary school entrance and prior to the blind curve there is a posted sign for reducing speed limits, but no sign indicating a school zone.

Eagles Road. The walkabout team also examined Eagles Road, which provides primary access to the High School, as well as provides access to the Elementary School for students arriving by bus. The walkabout team noted that the majority of the traffic on Eagles Road is for school arrival and dismissal. Eagles Road is a narrow road and does



not have sidewalks. Moreover, many of the adjacent residential properties are built out or fenced in property all the way to the roadway. While these extensions extend into the public right-of-way, recapturing this space for sidewalks may prove difficult. Eagles Road, east of the schools, narrows along a sharp S-curve. School buses occupy the entire width of the road during arrival and dismissal. A flashing beacon marks the eastern edge of the school zone on Eagles Road.

Historic Rail Road Bridge. East of the intersection of North Scenic Highway and Wolf's Creek Highway is a former rail road bridge, that is now closed off to public access. This bridge could provide a bicycle and pedestrian route to Rocky Gap for students and residents who live in the adjacent neighborhood. Also, the bridge is a key component to Rocky Gap's future plans for a comprehensive greenway. From the school, this bridge is located on the opposite side North Scenic Highway and would require a safe pedestrian crossing to be accessible for students.

Key barriers and issues

Lack of Sidewalks. Eagles Road and North Scenic Highway are the two roads used to access Rocky Gap Elementary and High School; neither road has a sidewalk for students or other community members. Without dedicated space for sidewalks, students are unable to walk along several roads in Rocky Gap without sharing travel space with motor vehicles. Although low traffic volumes mitigate potential conflicts, Rocky Gap will not be able to encourage safe and active transportation without dedicated space for sidewalks.

Lack of School Zone Signage and Pedestrian Visibility. The walkabout team observed only one rapid flashing school zone beacon – on Eagles Road to the east of the school. Although vehicles traveling on North Scenic Highway are traveling faster than those on Eagles Road, there were no similar lighted beacons indicating nearby schools, nor were there school zone signs. Additionally, the lack of signs for motorists to be aware of students and pedestrians create an environment where motorists do not expect pedestrians or students to be and creates potential for conflicts.

Lack of Crosswalks. There are no signalized or highlighted pedestrian crosswalks along North Scenic Highway in Rocky Gap. This is a barrier to walking, because students do not have a safe location for crossing the street and are left to cross at their own discretion. A visible crosswalk situated at an optimum location along a designated walking route would allow students to cross the street safely and would signal motorists that they should be aware of students walking.



Recommendations

Community Prioritized Infrastructure, based on strategy to complete or improve walking/biking infrastructure close to school first

- Sidewalk/ side path along North Scenic Highway between the entrance to the elementary school and Wolf's Creek Highway.

A sidewalk along the school side of North Scenic Highway would provide students and community members' space to walk to and from the elementary and high schools. Moreover, the sidewalk would provide a safe pedestrian route connecting the schools with the nearby commercial establishment and it would provide a safe pedestrian link to the historic rail bridge and it would also connect to the Fredrico Morini Bicycle Trail System, which follows Wolf's Creek Highway. Also, a sidewalk can act as a traffic calming measure to encourage motorists to reduce their speed while driving through Rocky Gap. Finally, the sidewalk, with curbs at certain sections, will act as a visual cue to motorists to be cognizant of potential pedestrians in the area.

Additional Infrastructure, based on walkabout observations and team discussions.

- Add high visibility pavement markings and stop bar markings to the walkway on Eagles Road between the elementary school and the high school.
- Install school zone flashing beacons on N. Scenic Highway to strengthen the school zone pavement markings
- Add streetscape enhancements for sidewalk/side path project along N. Scenic Highway and development of future greenway.
- Establish a pocket park where the elementary school plans to extend the driveway to separate the area between N. Scenic Highway and the student loading and unloading zones.
- Add a crosswalk on Wolf's Creek Highway at North Scenic Highway

Operational

- Formalize high school parking lot, north of Eagles Road, including ingress and egress movements
- Install additional signage to reinforce one way time-of-day movements along Eagles Road for student drop-off and pick-up
- Establish a Park-n-Walk at a nearby location (preferably on the same side of N. Scenic Highway as the school campus in effort to reduce afternoon queuing. Woody's Snack and Grocery may be a good location, assuming an agreement can be reached with the owner that would not negatively affect parking for his patrons (some of which are likely to be parents).
- Enhance pedestrian space along the driveways of the commercial buildings along North Scenic Highway with painted pavement and flexible bollards to better manage access into them.
- Set, post, educate and enforce school zone speed limits during school hours or arrival/dismissal times



Non-infrastructure

- Apply for a non-infrastructure grant to fund a Safe Routes to School Coordinator, provided that the coordinator will be able to work with at least three of the schools in Bland County.
- Re-evaluate land-use plans for former retail areas to accommodate to future economic development plans that support both the schools and the planned greenway
- Hire Crossing guards for Walking/Biking School Buses and other SRTS events

Walkabout Photos

Walkabout participants took photographs to further supplement safe routes to school project recommendations. The following photos highlight portions of the walkabout. All of the walkabout photos are available at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/on7onnn15jsouv1/yf6MqbduBP>.



North Scenic Highway, looking west towards school: A school pavement marking and a pedestrian sign are visible east of the elementary school. However, there are no sidewalks along the road, nor are there any markings or signs at the school's driveway.



North Scenic Highway, looking west past school: North Scenic Highway turns into a blind curve immediately to the west of the elementary school. This creates potential conflicts between motorists and those crossing North Scenic Highway to reach the elementary school.



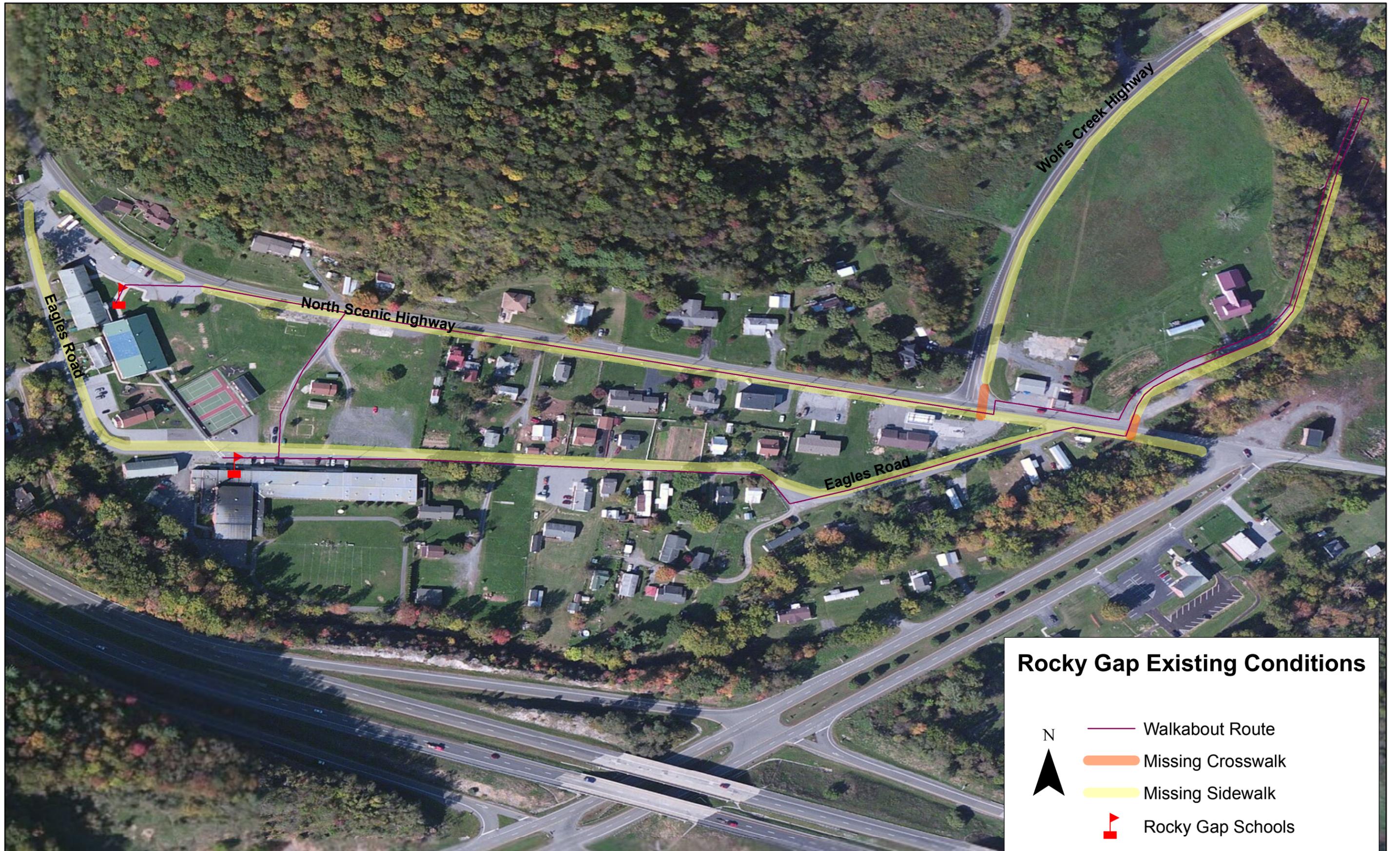
North Scenic Highway, looking east past school: Walkabout participants walk along North Scenic highway. Without sidewalks, pedestrians do not have a safe space separated from automobile traffic.

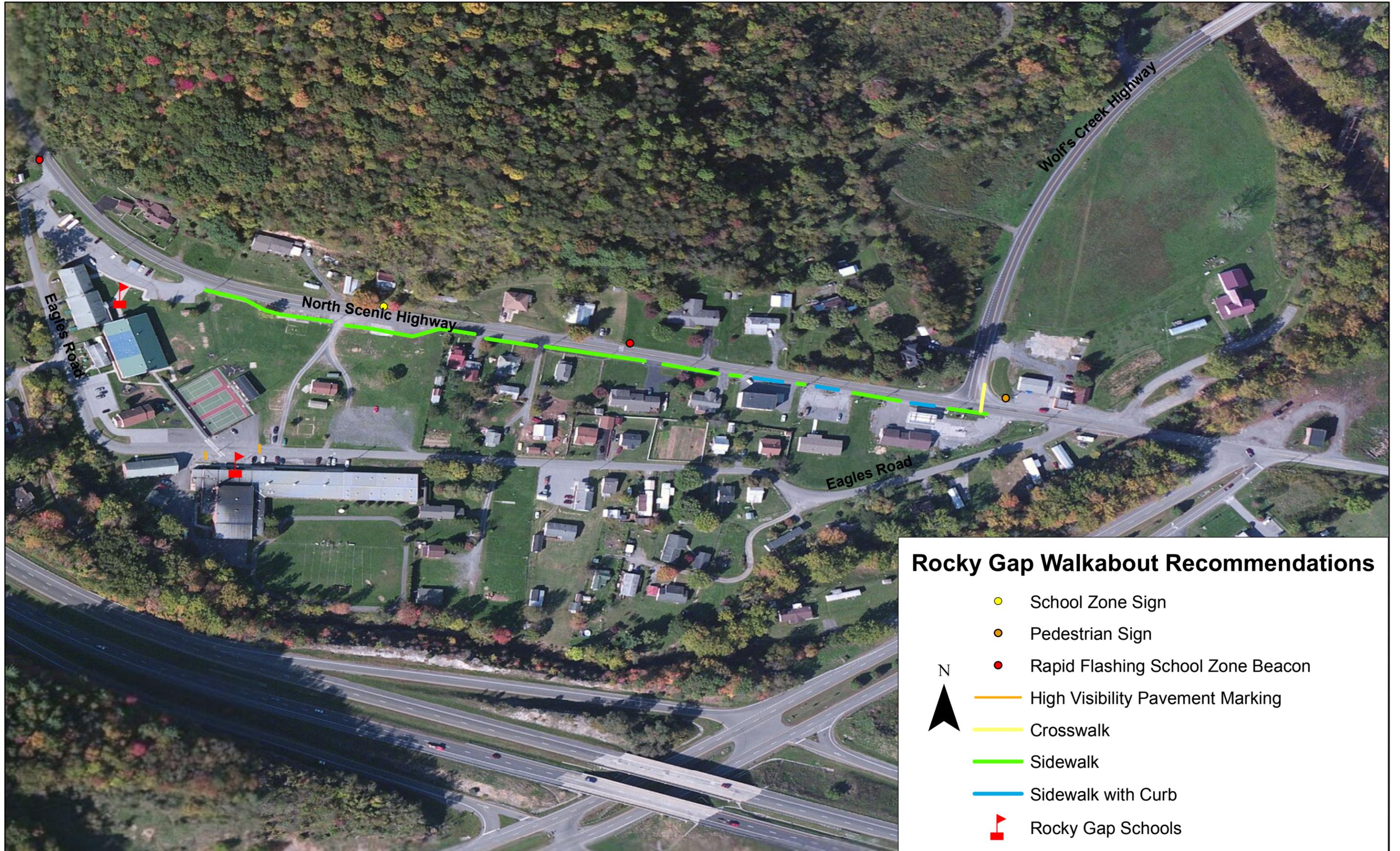


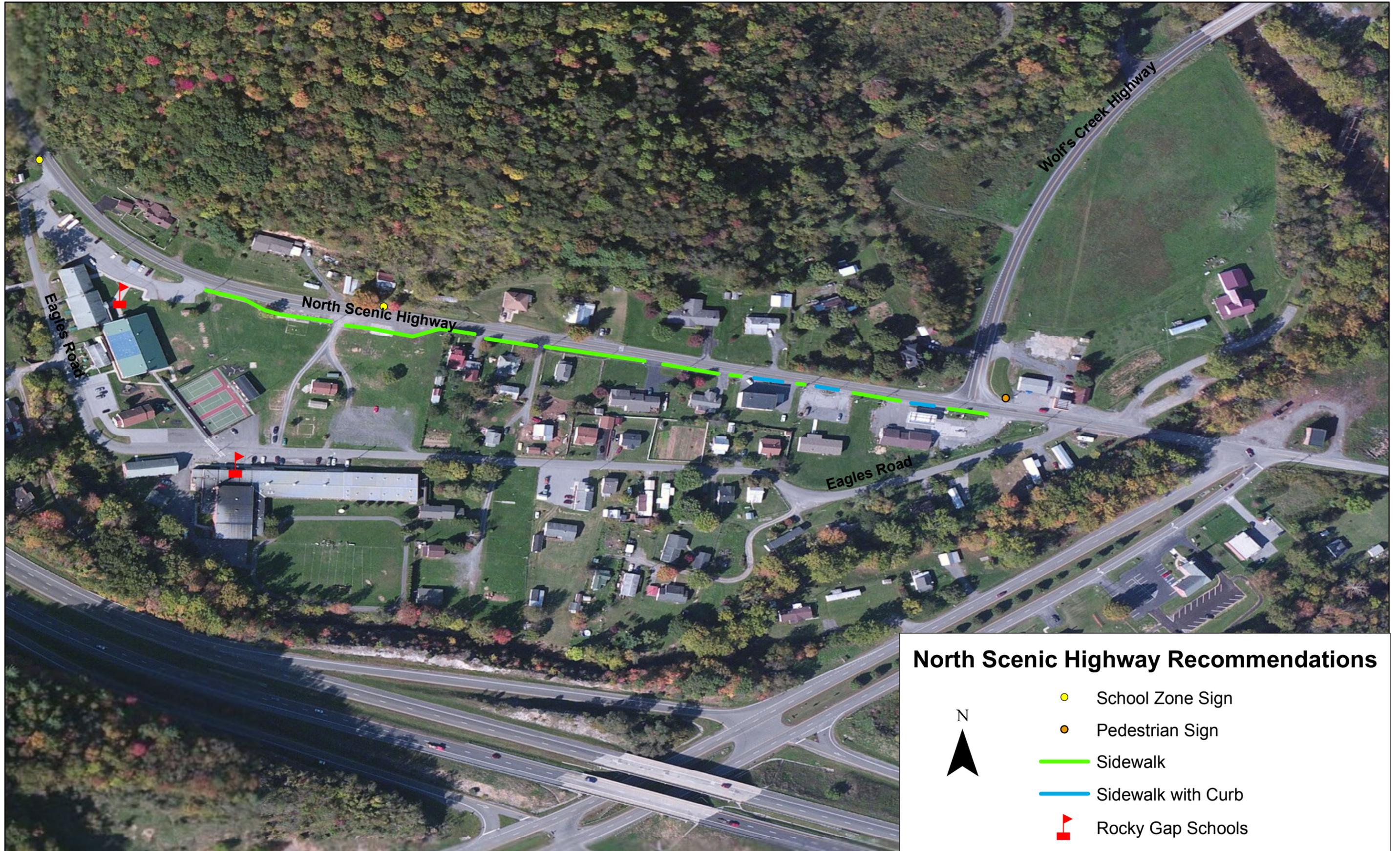
Rocky Gap Elementary School, school parking lot: Parents drop off children at the front entrance of the elementary school.



Eagles Road, looking west towards school: A walkabout participant walks along Eagles Road. Although Eagles Road has low traffic volumes throughout most of the day, buses take up the majority of the roadway during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal.







North Scenic Highway Recommendations



● School Zone Sign

● Pedestrian Sign

— Sidewalk

— Sidewalk with Curb

▲ Rocky Gap Schools

0 162.5 325 650 Feet

Enhanced Walkabout Infrastructure Projects

The following information will help answer some questions on the TAP application. If the TAP application sponsor is not a local government, it is highly recommend that the municipal engineer and project sponsor are consulted when applying to TAP projects. Additionally, since this project qualifies as a Safe Routes to School project it will be necessary to complete **Attachment B** of the TAP application. The application and attachment B request cost estimates; the cost estimates sited in the following table are for planning purposes only and all costs should be confirmed by the municipal engineer and local sponsor. The applicant is ultimately responsible for the information that is submitted on the application, thus the SRTS program recommends reviewing and, in some cases, supplementing the information in order to ensure a complete and competitive application.

The information below is provided to assist the locality with their TAP application, but does not guarantee that the locality will receive any funding as a result. VDOT's funding decisions are made by the Commonwealth Transportation Board, independent of the Safe Routes to School Program.

The deadline for the TAP application is **November 1, 2013**.

5. Project description, including termini and scope, with a map

- New sidewalk/walking path along the southern side of north scenic highway
- Side walk will connect Rocky Gap elementary with nearby commercial properties, and the intersection of Wolf's Creek Highway
- Approximately 70 feet of curbed sidewalk
- Approximately 1065 feet of sidewalk adjacent swales
- 24 ADA compliant curb ramps
- 3 high visibility sign assemblies

8. Primary Category of Eligibility

- Infrastructure related improvement or system that will provide safe routes for non-drivers.

9. Does this project qualify as a Safe Routes to School Project

- Yes. This project is an eligible infrastructure activity and is located within two miles of an elementary school.

16. The use of federal transportation funds requires compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); describe how this project will meet these requirements

- New sidewalks will be 60" wide, per ADA requirements.
- Curb ramps will meet ADA requirements, as well.

17. Project Constructability and Cost

The construction costs are estimated to be \$122,410. See the attached cost breakdown for a detailed account of project component costs. Additionally, Toole Design Group does not guarantee the accuracy of this opinion of probable cost and it is intended to be used for planning purposes only. The

actual final cost of the project will be determined through the tendering and construction process. Costs shown are represented in 2013 dollars and do not include design fees, right-of-way acquisition costs, survey fees or other administrative costs.

24. Does this project support an existing or planned highway project?

- This project does not support an existing or planned highway project.

26. Does the project provide connections to existing regional trails or pedestrian/bicycle facilities?

Does it provide a 'missing link' in the existing transportation network?

- Sidewalk connects to an existing bicycle route.
- Bicycle route does not have existing bike lanes.

27. Does the project provide bicycle/pedestrian facilities where none previously existed?

- New Sidewalk provides pedestrian facilities where none previously existed
- The project location is near an elementary school
- New sidewalk will provide a safe space for students to walk along North Scenic Highway

28. Which best describes the project's primary transportation function?

- Sidewalk provides alternate needs for transportation to and from school

29. Does this project add features/devices that will improve bicycle and pedestrian safety?

- One high visibility school zone sign
- Two high visibility pedestrian sign
- Sidewalks with buffer

30. Does this project incorporate traffic calming design elements?

- Although school zone signs and pedestrian signage are primarily for increasing pedestrian visibility, they can have an indirect traffic calming effect.

31. Is this project in the localities local/regional transportation plan?

- Component of the Rocky Gap Greenway plan

40. Is this project part of a larger/multi-phased project?

- The sidewalk is part of the Greenway plan, a multi-phase project

41. Has a master plan, feasibility and/or preliminary engineering studies been completed?

- The Rocky Gap Greenway Plan master planning study has been completed

Attachment B, 5. Describe the barriers that currently prevent kids from walking/biking safely to school and how this project would mitigate or remove those barriers, especially for improving safety and encouraging more kids to walk and bike to school.

- No sidewalks along streets adjacent to school

- No signage to inform motorists
- Sidewalk would allocate space specifically for walking, separate from the roadway or shoulder
- Signs would inform motorists to slow down while driving through Rocky Gap

North Scenic Highway (NSH) Sidewalk Infrastructure Improvements

Project Component

Item	Quantity	Unit Cost	SubTotal	Total
Sidewalks				
	Linear Feet			
NSH from school to unofficial parking lot entrance	240	\$30	\$7,200	
NSH unofficial parking lot first driveway	250	\$30	\$7,500	
NSH 1st to 2nd driveway	98	\$30	\$2,940	
NSH 2nd to 3rd driveway	186	\$30	\$5,580	
NSH 3rd to 4th driveway	102	\$30	\$3,060	
NSH 4th to 5th driveway	20	\$30	\$600	
NSH 5th to 6th driveway (post office parking lot planter)	25	\$30	\$750	
NSH 6th driveway to 7th driveway	18	\$30	\$540	
NSH 7th to 8th driveway (old bank building parking lot planter)	45	\$30	\$1,350	
NSH 8th to 9th driveway	90	\$30	\$2,700	
NSH 9th to 10th driveway (planter in front of Woody's)	30	\$30	\$900	
NSH 10th to 11th driveway (across from Wolf's Creek Hwy)	88	\$30	\$2,640	
				\$35,760
Curbs				
	Linear Feet			
NSH 5th to 6th driveway (post office parking lot planter)	50	\$30	\$1,500	
NSH 7th to 8th driveway (old bank building parking lot planter)	90	\$30	\$2,700	
NSH 9th to 10th driveway (planter in front of Woody's)	60	\$30	\$1,800	
				\$6,000
Curb Ramps				
	Each			
Eastern entrance to elementary school	1	\$2,500	\$2,500	
Unofficial Parking lot entrance	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
1st driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
2nd driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
3rd driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
4th driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
5th driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
6th driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
7th driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
8th driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
9th driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	
10th driveway	2	\$2,500	\$5,000	

11th driveway	1	\$2,500	\$2,500	
				\$42,500
Sign Assembly	Each			
School zone sign on NSH east and west of elementary school	2	\$250	\$500	
Pedestrian sign on NSH at Wolf's Creek Highway	1	\$250	\$250	
				\$750
Lump Sum Items	Lump Sum			
Mobilization (10%)	1	8500	\$8,500	
Maintenance and Projection of Traffic (10%)	1	8500	\$8,500	
				\$17,000
			Construction Subtotal \$	102,000
			Contingency (20%) \$	20,400
			Construction Total \$	122,400
			Survey (10%) \$	12,200
			Engineering/Design (20%) \$	24,500
			TOTAL \$	159,100

Construction cost estimates were developed for the recommendations by identifying pay items and establishing rough quantities. Unit costs are based on 2012 dollars and were assigned based on historical cost data from state departments of transportation and other sources. Please note that the estimates do not include any costs for easement or Right-of-Way acquisition, utility relocation, or the cost for ongoing maintenance. The overall estimates are intended to be general and used for planning purposes. Construction costs will vary based on the ultimate project scope (i.e. potential combination of projects) and economic conditions at the time of construction.